

THE AUDIT MODEL OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND SENIOR SECONDARY COURSE PROVIDERS

RESPONSES TO SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



OFFICE OF TASMANIAN
ASSESSMENT, STANDARDS
& CERTIFICATION

AUDITS AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The audit process and the formal reports issued after an audit are powerful tools that inform learning communities' continuous improvement processes. They assist schools and colleges in their efforts to improve teaching and learning, and the assessment of learning outcomes against defined standards by:

- acknowledging best practice and planned improvements
- identifying areas where improvements might be made
- identifying and supporting providers in taking any specific actions required to ensure community confidence in the reliability, integrity and validity of reported learner achievement.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

“DOES BEING AUDITED MEAN THAT THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG?”

Audits are a normal part of the quality assurance processes used by many organisations and institutions. Audits enable TASC to have confidence in the validity, reliability and integrity of results recommended by providers. There are many reasons why TASC may schedule an audit. These include: the period of time since a provider was last audited; the relative risk of some courses to the integrity of the TCE; the number of learners/courses provided; results of previous audits; patterns of reported student learning outcomes; complaints; major changes in delivery arrangements; and – in the case of Level 3 and 4 courses – systemic differences between internal and external ratings.

“WILL WE KNOW WHEN AN AUDIT IS HAPPENING OR DOES TASC JUST TURN UP ONE DAY?”

Providers are notified in advance of an audit. We aim to give as much notice as possible. Details such as the audit agenda are negotiated with the provider.

“WHY AM I BEING AUDITED?”

Providers are audited, not individual teachers. As a teacher of a course being examined at audit you may be asked by your principal/manager to supply documents and attend part of the audit meeting. You – as an individual – are not audited: **it is the provider's processes and systems of delivering and assessing** courses that are the subject of the audit.

“WHAT STANDARDS ARE APPLIED AT AUDIT?”

All courses' delivery and assessment are audited against four common standards:

- all of the knowledge, skills and experiences that comprise the course have actually been delivered to learners
- individual learners receiving the qualifications have been exposed to the knowledge, skills and experiences that comprise the course
- assessment tools, together with their associated marking guides and rubrics for making

assessment judgements reflect the documented standards of the course

- successful learners have met all of the assessment requirements for the course.

Courses with enhanced audit models (as noted in the quality assurance section of individual course documents) are also audited against one or both of the following additional standards:

- archived samples of individual student's work sufficient to illustrate the borderline between that judged as 'pass/SA' or not
- relationship to the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF).

“WILL ALL COURSES WE PROVIDE BE AUDITED?”

No. Usually TASC will nominate which courses will form the scope of the audit. Providers may also nominate courses that they wish to be audited.

“WHAT DO AUDITORS LOOK AT?”

This will vary depending on the quality assurance requirements of individual courses and the scope of the audit. Examples of typical sources of evidence that interest auditors are given on page 5.

“DO I NEED TO PRODUCE SAMPLES OF LEARNER WORK?”

1. Tabling a few marked samples of current learner work can be helpful. It shows auditors that assessment tasks and marking guides are actually used.
2. Some courses have work requirements such as learners keeping a log book/journal or creating a folio. Providers may be asked to table current samples of such learner work as evidence that the course requirements are being met. It is understood that – depending on the timing of the audit – these may be works in progress.
3. Some courses have quality assurance requiring the retention of copies of 'borderline' samples of learner work. In selecting samples for retention, providers should consider:
 - a. that the samples need to be substantial enough that they reflect the borderline between awards not ratings (e.g. Satisfactory Award not 'C' rating on a particular criterion)
 - b. the borderline in question is between 'PA' and 'SA' not those between higher awards (e.g. CA/HA or HA/EA)
 - c. the number of samples will depend on how many borderline cases have arisen in the time that the course has been provided. Commonsense judgements need to be made regarding the number of samples held, and for how long they are retained. As a general guide, between four to six samples from the past few years (saved in electronic form if possible) would suffice if this number had naturally arisen in that timeframe.

“WHAT HAPPENS AFTER AN AUDIT?”

TASC Officers will write a formal report about their audit findings. This will be sent to the principal/manager, and a copy is kept on TASC files. The audit report provides valuable feedback to schools and colleges. These reports may include:

- affirmations (confirmation of ideas, plans and future actions)
- commendations (praise for best practice)
- recommendations (identification of areas that could be improved)
- requirements (identification of areas where specific action is required).

Providers will be given time to address any requirements and TASC will work with providers to address these. Providers will be asked to supply evidence when any required actions have been taken. This may involve a follow-up audit or supplying documented evidence to TASC.

“DO AUDITORS WANT TO INTERVIEW LEARNERS? WHY?”

Providers will be informed at the time of notification of audit whether or not interviews with past and present learners will form part of the audit’s process.

Interviews with past and present learners of a course provide a source of evidence that actual course delivery and assessment matches the documentation tabled at the audit. For example, learners talking about their experiences of excursions or keeping journals (where such activities are required by a course) may provide a source of evidence that these have occurred. No learner is forced to undertake an interview and providers are usually asked to provide some willing learners. Auditors are not concerned with learners’ opinions regarding individual teachers.

TYPICAL SOURCES OF EVIDENCE CONSIDERED BY AUDITORS OF SENIOR SECONDARY COURSE PROVIDERS

Source	Examples	Evidence
Attendance records	Class attendance record book, sheets or spreadsheets indicating learner attendance/absence.	That learners have undertaken/participated in a course.
Course delivery plans	'Scope and sequence' documents that map when units of course content will be delivered, when work requirements are undertaken and when formative and summative assessments will take place. These are not necessarily individual lesson plans – they could be arranged weekly, monthly, by terms or for the whole course.	That the course content is being delivered and assessed (or that this is planned). Do not be concerned if the plans are annotated or updated: this indicates that they are being used and reflected upon.
Records of assessment	Record sheets, mark books or spreadsheets recording individual/class assessments. Such records note: the date of assessment; the task; the learning outcomes assessed (criteria/standard elements); the marks/grades achieved and/or comments made; and final assessment rubrics.	That summative assessment has taken place and is formally recorded.
Assessment instruments	Assessment task such as: tests/exams; task sheets; questionnaires; worksheets; and essay/project topics. These typically indicate: the task; what learning outcomes will be assessed; what format the response should take; the due date; and the relative significance/weighting of the task to the final assessment outcome.	That summative assessment has taken place (or that this is planned) and that learning outcomes are being assessed based on the evidence of learner work.
Marking guides	Marking guides articulate the features of a learner's work that are required in order to meet standards (e.g. correct answers to a fact test, characteristics of a unit of work or task that are required for a particular rating). Marking guides will have a strong relationship with the course's standards, but may contextualise the stated standards by reference to the specific features assessed in a given task.	That summative assessment has taken place (or that this is planned), and that assessment judgements are based on the evidence of learner work and course standards.
Assessment judgement 'rules'	These articulated 'rules' describe how assessment judgements are made. A simple rule might be '6/10 correct to get a 'C' on this test'. A final assessment rubrics describes the relationship between and the marks/grades given for individual assessment tasks and the final rating reported to TASC (i.e. the relative weighting given to specific tasks in the overall assessment judgement).	That assessment judgements – especially overall ones – are based on logical relationships between the evidence of learners' work and course standards.

Source	Examples	Evidence
Examples of learner work	1) A few examples of current, marked learner work for some of the main assessment tasks used. 2) Samples of learner work required by the course (e.g. a compulsory log book, journal, or folio). 3) Some courses have QA requiring the retention of 'borderline' examples.	1) That assessment tasks and marking guides are actually used. 2) That work requirements of the course are being addressed. 3) That there is a clear relationship between standards and learner work in critical assessment judgments.
Interviews with learners	Auditors may ask to interview past and present learners of a course. Providers identify learners willing to take part.	That the course content is being/has been delivered and assessed, and that any work requirements are being met.



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